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United States Senate

July 19, 2023

The Honorable Chiquita Brooks-LaSure
Administrator
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Administrator Brooks-LaSure:

I write today with deep concern over the recent reports of Tribal members in Montana being targeted by the ongoing Medicaid fraud in the state of Arizona. If true, victims need to receive immediate assistance and the perpetrators should be held accountable for this disgusting abuse of taxpayer dollars.

Arizona state officials have alleged a widespread Medicaid scam involving unlawful billing by fraudulent mental health treatment and addiction rehabilitation centers targeting tribal members in need of care. I am especially alarmed by the recent development that these fraudulent activities have reached Tribal members in Montana who are seeking treatment. By offering promises of treatment in exchange for changing their residency to Arizona, these fraudulent centers have reportedly recruited Montanans and left them without care and stranded in Arizona.

While it is unacceptable the Arizona State Medicaid program allowed this fraud to plague Arizona's Tribal Communities for so long that it spread to other States, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) also failed to identify this fraudulent waste of taxpayer dollars in the agency's oversight capacity. State Medicaid programs and CMS share responsibility for ensuring that Medicaid is used to deliver health care services and not misused for fraud, waste, or abuse and it's clear that responsibility was not taken seriously. Given the astounding negligence and its impact on vulnerable communities, I ask CMS to immediately investigate this matter further and provide a detailed report of their findings, including the scale of this fraud and what measures the agencies have taken to prevent this fraud from recurring and causing further harm to Tribal citizens.

Additionally, I urge the agency to place a high priority on assisting the victims of these scams, particularly Montana's Tribal members who have been left stranded in Arizona with no means to return home. It is of the utmost importance that these Tribal members are able to regain their safety and security, and return home so they can receive proper treatment.

Finally, I ask the agency to collaborate in facilitating the necessary resources and efforts to warn Tribes nationwide about this deceitful scam. Raising awareness is crucial in preventing more Tribal members from falling victim to these predatory schemes.

I ask you to take this matter seriously and act promptly to address these concerns. It is crucial that we ensure the integrity of Medicaid services and safeguard the wellbeing of Tribal communities across the nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Tester", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jon Tester
United States Senator